

Prayer diary

6 September 2020–2 January 2021



Pray with us



Enabling all ages to grow in faith

Anna Chaplaincy
Barnabas in Schools
Holy Habits
Living Faith
Messy Church
Parenting for Faith

Dear praying friends



What a challenging year 2020 has turned out to be. The consequences of the coronavirus pandemic have touched us

all. There has been so much loss in areas that hitherto we have taken for granted – in education, people's livelihoods, businesses, mental health and of course in the charity sector. But most sadly and painfully of all, there have been family bereavements. If you have suffered the loss of someone you love in this time, please accept my heartfelt sympathy.

I can honestly say that during my more than 30 years at BRF, there has never been a greater need of your prayers, both for the welfare of our staff and the ongoing work of our programmes and ministries. So thank you sincerely for your faithfulness in remembering to bring BRF before God on our behalf during these past months.

And your prayers are being answered. At the time of writing this, we are busy seeking to steer BRF wisely through these troubled waters with a lower level of financial support, while still maintaining the schedules for our publications, on which so many people rely.

There is also the continuing support for Messy Churches, Christian parents at home, older people, church leaders and our professional work with schools – all with temporarily reduced staffing. The inspired creativity among our programme and ministry teams in doing this, mostly online, has been remarkable.

In addition, our increased social media presence and online bulletins have been a blessing to many and used very widely. These have helped keep God's people informed for their prayers and resourced them in their Christian discipleship at a time when face-to-face church fellowship has been impossible.

Please keep praying for us, for your churches and for world leaders as we emerge from this crisis. May we not forget how God has been with us and what God has been saying to us at this extraordinary moment in recent history.

And as we invite you again to pray with us using this new prayer diary, be assured we are praying with you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Richard'.

Canon Richard Fisher
Chief Executive, BRF

Preparing to pray

Every moment can be prayer – a time to listen to and receive from God.

Every place can contain parable – revealing and teaching God's ways.

Everything can be a taste of heaven – an opportunity to experience God's love.

So, am I always praying, wherever I am?

Am I always seeing new things about God, in whatever I encounter?

Am I always being changed into God's likeness, through whatever happens?

May prayer be the air I breathe.

May parables be the truths I see.

May preparation for heaven be the journey I walk.

As I receive from you in prayer, may you touch, bless and glorify all that is in my heart and mind.

As I meet with you in parable, may I learn to know you better through every experience every day.

As I trust you to equip me for heaven, may I be transformed and made ready for the beauty of eternity.

Amen

For God's work through BRF across the generations



Before you start praying, take a moment to become aware of yourself and what's around you... Open your eyes, breathe deeply, let all your senses come alive and ask God to help you sense God's presence.

Prayer in the Making by Lyndall Bywater (BRF, 2019)

Thought for the week

Young men and women,
Old men and children.

Let them praise the name of the LORD

PSALM 148:12–13

Pray with us for

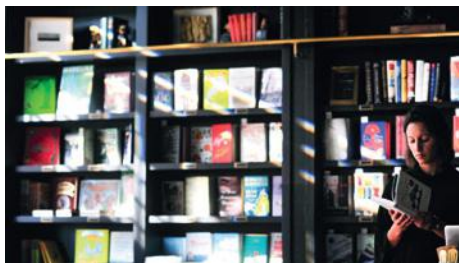
- Children and teachers starting term after this year's disruption
- Inspiration for the **Parenting for Faith team** as families settle into new routines after the summer break
- Retired grandparents and elderly relatives who receive support from **Anna Chaplains**
- **Messy Church teams** as they support families with the encouragement of BRF's national team
- Each other as we continue our discipleship journey and making Jesus known

God of all people,
children and grandparents,
teenagers and elderly,
young adults and godparents,
the working and retired,
the single and parents,
help us all to honour and celebrate each other,
in communities of grace and love
for your glory. Amen

For Christian writers, publishers and distributors

The Holy Spirit of God is everywhere and in everything, if we only look with the right eyes and a humble frame of mind.

At Home in Lent by Gordon Giles (BRF, 2018)



Thought for the week

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of
his hands...

Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

PSALM 19:1, 4

Pray with us for

- Prophetic inspiration for **BRF authors** writing words that will be read over a year from now
- **BRF's content creation team**, that they may be responsive to God's Spirit as they prepare titles for publication
- God's blessing on **BRF's marketing team** as they engage with online retailers and bookshops about Bible reading and prayer
- Healthy partnerships between **Christian publishers** despite the postponement of conferences this year
- The reach of new BRF titles this month, including *At Home in Advent*, *The Celtic Year*, *Seven Sacred Spaces* and *Journeying through Advent with New Daylight*

As we open our Bibles, let us open our lives to receive your truth.
As we open our lives, let us open our minds to learn your ways.
As we open our minds, let us open our hearts to know your
presence and reveal your love
wherever we are and wherever we go this week. Amen

For God's work in and through BRF's programme teams



Learning how to be a Christian isn't about academic study in the way we usually understand it. It is fundamentally about prayer from which the rest of life, including study, flows.

When You Pray by Joanna Collicutt (BRF, 2019)

Thought for the week

Let us aspire to prayerful work: we can both do God's work when we pray and also pray while we work, making our work holy. Our work this day can be our prayer and the glory that we give to God.

At Home in Lent by Gordon Giles (abridged) (BRF, 2018)

Pray with us for

- The many evangelistic opportunities afforded by Messy Church and in particular for the disrupted 'deepening discipleship' pilots
- Good ideas for the **Parenting for Faith** team – Rachel, Becky, Anna, Kate and Mary – producing podcasts to support families and the work they do in the community
- Network opportunities for sharing the discipleship potential of **Holy Habits**
- Energy and inspiration for Debbie, Julia, Alex and Wendy, coordinating the national **Anna Chaplaincy** network
- For Jane and Chris and the **Barnabas in Schools** freelance team, developing online resources to support primary RE

We kneel before the mystery,
we bow beneath the glory,
we wait within the love,
we rest beside the presence,
we listen to the silence,
that we may receive in this moment
more of the grace and the beauty of God in Christ.
Amen

For God's work in and through us in this world

Let today be a day when you look with open eyes at the world, to see something that you have never noticed before and that you can offer to God with thanksgiving.

You Are Mine by David Walker (adapted) (BRF, 2019)

Thought for the week

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars... through Sister Water... through Brother Fire...
Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks.

'The Canticle of the Sun' attributed to St Francis



Pray with us for

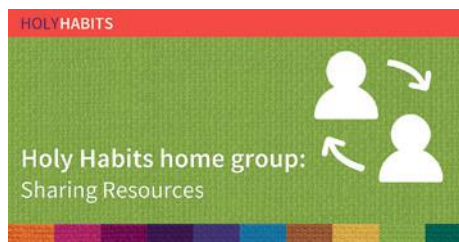
- The editors of our **Bible reading notes** – Sally Welch, Helen Paynter, Jackie Harris, Daniele Och and Eley McAinsh – helping readers become daily disciples of the Word
- **Readers of *New Daylight, Guidelines, Day by Day with God, The Upper Room* and *Bible Reflections for Older People*** – that each may respond to God's words for them
- Schools exploring creatively what the Bible says about caring for God's world
- New families in **Messy Churches** and **Christian families at home**, working out what it means to care for creation
- The influence of Helen Julian's book *Franciscan Footprints* in and beyond this season, when many churches focus on the gift of creation

Lord of the skies above and the galaxies beyond,
Lord of the oceans deep and the mountains high,
Lord of all green and growing things and animal life,
Lord of all that you have made,
teach us again how to be your creation carers,
bringing life to your planet and your people
by your grace.
Amen

For God's work in us as disciples of Jesus

We need to make prayer part of our lives – indeed, a daily habit – if we want to learn to pray. Experts tell us that takes the average person 30 days of doing the same thing before it becomes a habit.

Prayer: A beginner's guide by Jane Holloway (BRF, 2009)



Thought for the week

In prayer we remind ourselves of the Father, who created us; of the Lord Jesus, whose love holds us safe; and of the Holy Spirit, who works creatively in and through us.

This is how each day's discipleship starts.

Pray with us for

- Churches and individuals using **Holy Habits resources** to 'make disciples'
- Those **Messy Churches** who are delivering Holy Habits sessions to help messy believers become messy believers
- Christian families seeking to establish home as the primary place for discipleship with ideas from **Parenting for Faith**
- **Anna Chaplains** walking alongside the elderly, helping them continue to bear fruit
- Those using **Living Faith** resources to explore Bible study and prayer

Holy and discipling God,
 teach us through your Son,
 who always did what he saw his Father doing.
 strengthen us by the Spirit,
 who speaks to us of Jesus.
 guide us in the love of the Father,
 who pours out his Spirit on us.
 so that we may be your followers
 all the days of our life.
 Amen

For God's work in and through older people



Our prayers always get through to God... we never get the 'engaged' or 'number unobtainable' tones. We will never be put on hold 'because all our lines are busy'!

Prayer: A beginner's guide by Jane Holloway (BRF, 2009)


Thought for the week

It is because God loves us that he knows what we need... If only we could relax into the fact that God's relationship with us is absolutely secure, we would find that we don't need so many words.

When You Pray by Joanna Collicutt (BRF, 2019)

Pray with us for

- Inspiration for Debbie, who pioneered the **Anna Chaplaincy** movement and continues to guide its development
- Wisdom and good conversations for **Julia** when she is talking with denominational leads who work with older people
- **Churches** as they seek creative ways to support faith among the Fourth Agers of their communities
- The network and support that **Alex and Wendy** provide to the Anna Chaplaincy network and give thanks for their encouragement
- For those involved in the Anna Chaplaincy **working group**, including Jill, Brian, Catriona, Lindsay, Sally and Erica



Dear God,
 who created all people in your image,
 teach us to value each other across the generations
 and to listen and learn from each other's stories,
 knowing that in meeting another
 we are always on holy ground.
 Amen

For God at work in our primary schools

The reason we pray isn't just to get God's help... We pray because it gives God the chance to open our eyes – to remind us that we are not alone and to breathe new courage into us.

Lyndall Bywater in *Holy Habits Bible Reflections: Prayer*, edited by Andrew Roberts (BRF, 2019)



Thought for the week

The Lord commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so that the next generation would know his laws, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God.

See PSALM 78:5–7

Pray with us for

- Jane and Chris of BRF's **Barnabas in Schools** resourcing primary RE and delivering creative RE Days and INSET sessions.
- Energy and inspiration for **freelancers** Chip, Jane L, Jane W, John, Joy, Lisa and Debbie
- **Christian teachers** in schools, living out their faith alongside the children and influencing local and national decisions about education
- **Christian parents** and **Messy Church** teams seeking creative and professional ways to work with local schools
- **BRF staff** Adrian and Rebecca preparing video pieces to resource the teaching of Christianity in primary schools

A prayer for our schools:

Dear Lord of all our questions and answers,
 who opened minds through parables
 and touched lives with healing compassion,
 help all those who are called to teach,
 granting them creative ideas for learning
 and sensitive hearts to the needs of each child in their care.
 Amen

For faith to be shared at home and within communities

We pray because God himself modelled in Jesus the life of prayer. Jesus did not say ‘If you pray’ but ‘When you pray’.

Prayer: A beginner's guide by Jane Holloway (BRF, 2019)

Thought for the week

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?... As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’

ROMANS 10:14–15



10 *Enabling all ages to grow in faith*

Pray with us for

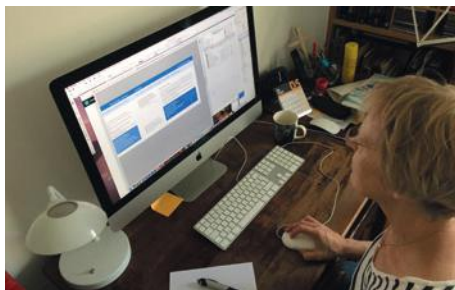
- Christian families sharing faith at home with their children this half-term
- **Messy Churches** welcoming many new to church, sharing with them the light of Jesus that overcomes the darkness
- **Messy Vintage** teams leading sessions that bring comfort and renewal of faith among the elderly and vulnerable
- Churches using the **Holy Habits** Making More Disciples resource that equips congregations to be confident in sharing the gospel
- The **Barnabas in Schools** team as they sensitively and professionally explore what Christians believe with teachers and primary-aged children

Creator of light, life and love,
 whose light eclipses the darkness,
 whose life is stronger than death,
 and whose love never ends,
 stir up in us the bright flame of your light,
 so that it shines out and brings life and love
 to our homes, our schools and our communities,
 drawing more and more to follow you.
 Amen

For God's work through the BRF staff team

To be a Christian is to find one's primary belonging in relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Every other belonging is subordinate to and consequent upon that.

You Are Mine by David Walker (BRF, 2019)



Thought for the week

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord... It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

Pray with us for

- Positive and fruitful relationships between all in the **BRF office family** in Abingdon
- **Senior managers** Jay, Karen, Sara and Olivia, as they manage the teams they serve
- Inspiration for **BRF's fundraising team** as they network with supporters and seek new donors towards BRF's mission and ministry
- BRF book and web **designers**, programme and finance **administrators**, office managers, volunteers and supporters.
- Canon Richard Fisher, **BRF's chief executive**, as he seeks both the welfare of staff and wisdom from God about BRF's future

God of our life's pilgrimage,
 we know that in company with you,
 no experience is wasted,
 no encounter is by chance,
 no episode on our journey is without meaning.
 Help us to go on bearing fruit into old age,
 until you call us home.
 Amen

For God's blessing on Messy Church



It's amazing how hung up we still get on words when we pray. God who communicates through nature and music, children's laughter and a friend's touch, doesn't need us to stick to words when we talk with him.

Prayer in the Making by Lyndall Bywater (BRF, 2019)

Thought for the week

The astonishing privilege of prayer is that it is the means by which we connect with God's heart, and, as we do so, our own hearts start to line up with God's.

Lyndall Bywater in *Holy Habits Bible Reflections: Prayer*, edited by Andrew Roberts (BRF, 2019)

Pray with us for

- Over 160 Messy Church **regional coordinators**, supporting local Messy Churches with resources and encouragement
- The messy discipleship research conducted by **Church Army** to help reimagine church today
- Messy Church **team leaders** who as pioneers may be feeling undervalued
- The writers of *Get Messy!* magazine, that they may be inspired with fresh ideas
- **Freelance trainers** who help start and share good practice with Messy Churches



Welcoming God,
grow your family through Messy Church.
Creator God,
set our imaginations on fire.
God of old and young,
help us to be a church for all ages.
Joyful God,
help us celebrate you in all we do.
Loving God,
help us all walk more closely with Jesus Christ.
Amen

For God's strength and guidance for Christian parents

We believe that God is always watching us and watching over us. God is our constant companion, speaking to us in our inner being through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

At Home in Lent by Gordon Giles (BRF, 2018)

Thought for the week

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray...' He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Father...'

LUKE 11:1–2



Pray with us for

- Christian parents, many of whom discovered new confidence to explore **faith at home** during the lockdown months of this year
- Families where only one care-giver is Christian, who seeks to be a **faithful witness to Jesus** in the household
- **Single-parent Christian families** who often face financial and time challenges that impinge on their care for their children
- **Families with adopted children** whose lives have often been scarred by early trauma
- For **Rachel Turner and the Parenting for Faith team** as they prepare suitable online materials to support all these varied Christian families

Dear God, our perfect parent,
 you call us to pass on the story of your faithfulness
 to our children and our children's children.
 Help us to parent, godparent and grandparent
 the next generations
 through prayer and by our example.
 For your Kingdom's sake.
 Amen

For God's guiding hand on BRF's trustees

It's not being useful that is the most important thing; it is being faithful.
It's not being successful that is the most important thing; it is being fruitful.
It's not being right that is the most important thing; it is being loving.

Martyn Payne

Thought for the week

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.

MICAH 6:8



Colin Fletcher, chair of BRF's trustees

14 *Enabling all ages to grow in faith*

Pray with us for

- **BRF's council of trustees** which meets this week, planning among other things for BRF's centenary in two years' time
- Wisdom concerning **decisions over finances** and the scope for new initiatives, particularly following the disruption earlier this year
- The prompting of the Holy Spirit for **Rt Revd Colin Fletcher** (chair of trustees) and **Canon Dr Christina Baxter** (vice-chair) in their leadership roles
- Inspired input from the other members of the Council: **Peter, Alistair, Sarah, Jane, Paul and Mike**
- **The whole BRF family of supporters** – readers, staff, donors, freelancers and volunteers – who each play a part in growing the all-age kingdom of God

Heavenly Father,
let today be a day of listening,
both to voices we know and trust already,
and also to those who offer us different views
or new ways of thinking about familiar things.
Grant that we may discern your voice
in the words of others.

Amen

You Are Mine by David Walker (BRF, 2019)

For God's work through BRF this Advent



The prayer 'your kingdom come' can be understood as a request for the Spirit to be at work for good, both in the lives of those who pray and in the whole world.

When You Pray by Joanna Collicutt (BRF, 2019)

Thought for the week

In prayer we bow before:
 the love that can't stop loving;
 the gift that can't stop giving;
 the light that can't stop enlightening;
 the blessing that can't stop blessing.
 We kneel before our God, who never changes.

Pray with us for

- God's blessing on all those reading and praying with this year's **BRF Advent books**, *At Home in Advent* and *Journeying through Advent with New Daylight*
- End-of-term energy for the **Barnabas in Schools team** helping children
- Those who are exploring the true meaning of Advent and Christmas
- Creativity for **Messy Church teams** planning a special Christingle, written in partnership with The Children's Society, and Christmas services for families
- Ideas for **Christian parents** who are wanting to make this Advent special for their children at home
- Those on their Advent journey of discipleship using **BRF's Bible reading notes**

It's time to get ready,
 it's time to remember,
 it's time to rehearse the great story,
 it's time to celebrate your coming,
 both into our world and into our lives.
 May the truth, the wonder and the power of this time,
 touch us ever more deeply this Advent.
 Amen

For God's work through Living Faith and Holy Habits

Prayer is key to understanding God's heart... a God who is longing to welcome us 'home'.

Prayer: A beginner's guide by Jane Holloway (BRF, 2009)

Thought for the week


Faith is about going deeper than the surface, further than the horizon, wider than the moment.

Faith is about living in our three-dimensional world but aware of the eternal dimensions all about us.



Pray with us for

- **BRF staff** at Abingdon who come together each day to commit their work to God and pray for **the wider BRF family**
- Ever greater synergy between the various **BRF programmes** around exploring discipleship for all ages and at all stages of faith
- A renewal of **BRF's founding vision** to help all of us 'get a move on spiritually'
- A deepening of **BRF's fellowship of prayer** among those who use this prayer diary, the weekly updates and social media prayers
- The pioneering ministry of Andrew, whose **Holy Habits resources** are helping churches and individuals engage afresh with Christian discipleship



Stir up in us, O Lord,
a living faith
that is alert to you in the lives of others,
that hears from you in life's ups and downs,
that leans on you in all circumstances,
and that reveals you in our being and our doing,
each and every day.
Amen

For discerning God's answers to our prayers

God may answer our prayers with: 'Yes, I thought you'd never ask!'; 'Yes, but not yet'; 'Yes, but not in the way that you think'; or sometimes with, 'No, because I love you too much.'

Pete Greig, quoted in *Prayer: A beginner's guide* by Jane Holloway (BRF, 2009)



Thought for the week

Pete Greig goes on to write:

Some prayers aren't answered because God himself is a greater answer than the thing we are asking for, and God wants to use our sense of need to draw us into a deeper relationship with himself.

Pray with us for

- BRF's many **supporters and volunteers**, nurturing and growing faith through service
- BRF's **ministry and programme leaders** – Debbie, Jane, Lucy and Rachel – leading and inspiring their teams
- BRF's **senior managers, CEO and trustees**, discerning God's leading for the year ahead
- BRF's **future direction** after a year that has been very challenging for everyone
- **Our world leaders**, that they and we might not forget what we learned during the Covid-19 crisis and how God was with us

Listen!

The creator of the universe loves us!

What other devotion do we need?

'I have loved you with an everlasting love' (JEREMIAH 31:3)

The creator of the universe is on our side!

What other reassurance do we need?

'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (ROMANS 8:31)

The creator of the universe sings our praise!

What other commendation do we need?

'He will rejoice over you with singing' (ZEPHANIAH 3:17)

For God's work in us all through the prince of peace



This is miracle. This is mystery.
This is true.
God lies wrapped as a baby in
a mother's arms.

Amazing love!

Martyn Payne

Thought for the week

Mary said: let it be to me according to
your word.

Like Mary, I leave my prayer in your
hands and trust your answer.

Mary said: do whatever he tells you.

Like Mary, help me to resist trying to
figure everything out.

Ian Adams in *Holy Habits Bible Reflections:
Prayer*, edited by Andrew Roberts (BRF, 2019)

Pray with us for

- Those in **Messy Churches** who are hearing the good news of Jesus for the first time
- Those who are sharing Jesus **with the elderly in care homes**, especially those who have no relatives near by
- Families using resources from **BRFs Parenting for Faith** at home this Christmas
- Inspiration for **speakers and church leaders** delivering services and the Christmas message to large congregations
- **Each other** – that we might encounter with childlike wonder the mystery of Christmas once again

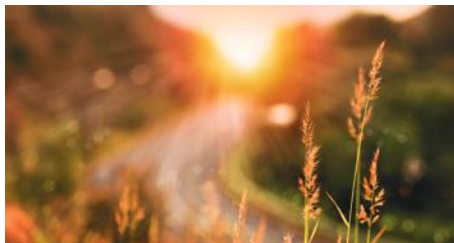


The patriarchs were promised it.
The prophets foretold it.
The people longed for it.
The nations sought it.
And now in our time, it has come.
Salvation is here!
It has dawned on us from on high.
Thank you, Father, for Jesus.

For thankfulness for God's provision for BRF

When we decide to turn to God in thanksgiving, when we determine to trust and not be afraid, as he has again and again invited us to do, something of God's nature is made real in us.

When You Pray by Joanna Collicutt (BRF, 2019)



Thought for the week

Nothing with you is wasted.
Nothing with you is worthless.
Nothing with you is without meaning.
'The Lord will keep your going out and you're coming in from this time forth and forever more.'

PSALM 121:8

Pray with us for

- The blessings received from **every book and set of Bible reading notes** published and every resource written this past year
- **Lives transformed** through our programmes over the last twelve months
- **Answered prayers** for protection, inspiration and guidance of each BRF staff member through the challenges of 2020
- **Refreshment** during the Christmas break for all who pray for, give to and support God's work through BRF
- **God's blessing** on BRF in 2021, while giving thanks for God's faithfulness during the last difficult year for all of us

God of new beginnings,
God of a new heaven and a new earth,
God of new creations,
God of yesterday, today and forever,
we come to you to start again.
There is no better place to be.
Amen

The BRF prayer

Almighty God,
you have taught us that your word is a lamp for our feet
and a light for our path. Help us, and all who prayerfully read your word,
to deepen our fellowship with you and with each other through your love.
And in so doing may we come to know you more fully, love you more truly
and follow more faithfully in the steps of your Son Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forevermore.
Amen

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